

Dear Public Health Committee Members,

I am writing this testimony in response to Bill 5630, an act concerning an Advanced Dental Hygienist Practitioner (ADHP). I am writing on behalf of many – colleagues, dental hygiene students, and public citizens.

I have been a registered dental hygienist for 25 years. I have a B.S. in Dental Hygiene and an M.S. in Health Education. I am well-educated, highly skilled, well-experienced, and current in my field. Yet the scope of my clinical dental hygiene practice is limited. I am underutilized. I speak for many.

My current position is fulltime dental hygiene educator at a local program for Dental Hygiene – Briarwood College. In addition to my teaching duties, I am also the faculty student advisor for the student component of the American Dental Hygienists' Association. As both clinical and didactic instructors, my colleagues and I are acutely aware of the need to fully prepare students by exposing them to timely, sound, evidenced-based, and technologically-current information and practices that will meet the many and diverse needs and demands of all individuals. We stress the value of continually being mindful of the need to individualize quality, comprehensive care for all. Yet, in reality, we know that most of our current graduates will not serve many groups that are especially needy of this care – if things remain as they are. This is because of access to care and other barriers to care, and the plain fact that they will be underutilized due to job restrictions. This is unfortunate and unnecessary.

Currently, many groups are denied access to care, i.e., senior citizens, special needs, and lower income individuals. The American Dental Hygienists' Association has made a commitment to resolving these health care disparities which generally all involve access to comprehensive preventive AND primary oral health care. As a dental hygiene educator, faculty advisor, and active member, I stand behind the ADHA in this commitment. I acknowledge that the ADHP as a mid-level registered dental hygienist can be specially trained for an expanded role that can provide significant help to overcome these barriers to appropriate oral health care. This advanced-educated, advanced-skilled dental hygienist, can be utilized to fill a great need in providing primary oral care in addition to preventive care to countless underserved individuals.

The promotion of the ADHP will afford Dental Hygienists the opportunity to be utilized to their potential while simultaneously minimizing, if not eliminating barriers to oral healthcare. The ADHP, is therefore, an intelligent, sensible, community-minded solution. And so, I strongly urge you to support this bill not only for the benefit of the Dental Hygiene profession but for the benefit of many who truly are in need.

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